

*Hearing without Doing, not sufficient to
5380 Salvation.*

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the
Evening Lecture
In Lime-street.

BY
J A B E Z E A R L E.
Sept. 29. 1706. At his leaving the said Lecture.

Mat. vii. 24, 25, 26, 27. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise Man, which built his House upon a Rock, &c.*
Gal. vi. 7, 8, 9. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: For what a Man soweth, that shall he also reap, &c.*

L O N D O N:

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The Dedication.

To the Encouragers of the Evening-Lecture in Lime-street.

Gentlemen,

YOUR Request has oblig'd this plain Discourse to appear in the World, and submit it self to the Censure of such as will give themselves the Trouble to read it. If it may be of any Service to Souls, I have my End, and I hope you have yours. In the Course of my Preaching I have given you Encouragement to expect nothing from me, but what I judge to be the Truth of God, propos'd in a plain and familiar Dress. And the Circumstances that call'd for this Sermon seem'd more peculiarly to require that the Subject should be important, and the Management serious.

I am oblig'd by my Profession to be a Lover of Souls, and by the Relation in which I have stood to you, and the Kindness you have expressed to me, to be tenderly concern'd for Yours; and I am sure

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I would have left you better Advice at Parting if I had known how.

I shall only add to what I have said in the Sermon a few Things that may be of particular Service as You are Younger People and a Lecture. As to the former.

Tit 2. 6. Be sober minded; remembering that humble Thoughts of your own Understandings, and the strictest Guard of your Senses and Passions is highly needful and most becoming.

Beware of an Enchanting World. Don't expect too much, don't pursue too vehemently, be timely convinc'd by Scripture and other Men's Experience of what the Event will sadly shew, that the World is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.

Watch particularly against the inordinate Love of Ease and Pleasure. Here I reckon lies your greatest Danger. Inure your selves to Labour and Self-denial, and tremble to be found among those at last that are Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God.

Take the utmost Care of your Company. Fly the Society of those whose Principles or Practices are

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are corrupt. I mean contract no Intimacy with such Men. Where real Business calls, you must follow under the Protection of Divine Grace. But I beseech you never make 'em Bosom Friends nor Companions of your innocent Pleasures. In the Latter Instance I am most apprehensive. When ever you see it necessary to relax and divert, do it under the Guard of suitable Company. A Liberal Glass has often been the Vehicle of spiritual Poison. And its no wonder to find the Contagion seize us upon too great Freedoms with infected Persons.

Keep up a Regular Course of private Devotion. Don't let Business prevent you in the Morning, nor Company in the Evening. An unfrequented Closet will make a barren Soul.

Be diligent in your Callings; particularly you that are Servants, that Religion may not suffer as an Encourager of Idleness, by the just Complaint of your Family, or those you serve. Be not Slothful in Business; Adorn the Doctrine of Rom. 12. 11. Tit. 2. 10. God your Saviour in all Things.

Don't set Death and Judgment at too great a Distance, This is the Ruine of Thousands; They put far from them the Evil Day, and while it is at a Distance in their Imaginations, it often surprizes them Unprovided: Or if they live, they contract a Habit of delaying, that follows 'em to Old Age, and makes them ridiculously put off still, as tho' they expected in the Literal Sense, to renew their Youth. Ob! Remember now is the accepted Time, don't put off necessary Work to an Uncertain Futurity. Putting it off for a Day may be putting it off for Ever.

As you are a Society, I beg leave to advise you 2 or 3 Things.

Don't neglect the Stated Ministry you are under upon the Account of your Evening Opportunities. All the Day is the Lord's.
And

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And it would be much to the Disgrace of Evening Lectures in general, if for their sake you should neglect the Ordinary Seasons of Worship: This is a Free will Offering, an Extraordinary Sacrifice, which was never allow'd to put by a stated one.

Don't let this intrench upon Family, or Closet Worship. If due Prudence can't make both consist (as it might with many, and I hope do's with you) you had much better omit This than Them.

Have a great Care that By-Ends don't sway you; and that you cover nothing Base, nothing Secular, under the fair Pretence of multiply'd Devotions. The Eyes of the World will be upon you, and the Eye of God is so: Your Miscarriage will be of greater Scandal and higher Guilt than that of others.

After all, see that ye do not neglect Church-Communion; Renew your Baptismal Covenant, and make a Personal Surrender of your Selves to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and avow Him to be your God by the Solemn Rite of the Lord's Supper, a Plain and Express Command of Christ as any in the Bible, tho' scandalously neglected by many of those who seem to shew a Regard to other Precepts and Appointments.

I shall Conclude with my Hearty Thanks for the Opportunity of Service I have had among you, and the Encouragement you have given me; and Hearty Prayers that you may all Grow in Grace and the Knowledge of Christ, under your Plentiful Means, and at last Meet together in the General Assembly of the Just. This is what becomes Him to Wish and Pray, who is,
Gentlemen,

Your most Oblig'd Faithful
Servant and Soul's Friend,
J. E.

JAMES I. 22.

But be ye Doers of the Word, not Hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

IN the foregoing Verse the Apostle Exhorts to *receive with meekness the Ingrafted Word*; upon this Consideration, that it is *able to save our Souls*.

These Words are added to direct our Expectations, and prevent our fancying that the meer hearing of the Word will avail to that Blessed End, if it be not admitted to guide our Practice and govern our Lives. *But be ye Doers, &c. q. d.* Tho' the Word be a *Word of Life*, and *able to save your Souls*, yet you'll be miserably mistaken if you imagine this Effect will issue upon any Regard to it, short of a sincere Compliance with the Precepts it contains.

Now it is of the last Consequence to those that sit at the Feet of them that dispense the Everlasting Gospel, to be duly appriz'd of this Matter, lest they fall from Exalted Expectations into the lowest Hell, and wake at last out of a pleasing Dream into unutterable Horrors; which will infallibly be the Case of such as *know their* Luke 12. 47. *Master's Will and do it not.*

Knowing therefore the Terrors of the Lord, we perswade Men. It must needs affect us, to think, how many constant *Hearers* are gone from our Worshipping *Assemblies* to the wretched *Society* of Devils, with whom they are *blaspheming God*, by reason of their *Plagues*; and roaring out under the unsufferable Weight of Almighty

Vengeance, for despising the *Grace* of that Gospel, the *Preaching* of which they so diligently attended.

We must needs tremble at the view of a Crowded-Auditory, when we have so much Reason to be apprehensive lest many of them who seem devout and serious Hearers, should be rejected at last, as *Workers of Iniquity* !

This can be prevented no other way but by your doing the Word you hear ; and therefore how can I spend the Time before me upon *this Occasion*, better than in Engaging your Thoughts upon so awful a Subject ? Which I shall by God's help, attempt in the Method following.

I. I would consider that doing of the Word which is the Indispensible Duty of every one that hears it.

II. Consider that bare Hearing which Men would fain Substitute in the Room of Doing.

III. Enquire whence it comes to pass, that Men should ever deceive themselves with such a vain Imagination.

IV. Demonstrate the vanity of this Conceit, and shew that such Expectations will be certainly frustrated.

V. Apply.

I. I am to consider, that *Doing of the Word*, which is the Indispensible Duty of every one that hears it. The General Import of this Expression is obvious enough. To be a Doer of the Word is to comply with the Precepts it enjoins, to be a *Doer of the Work* as it is, v. 25. In our Lord's own Words, *To observe whatsoever he commands us.*

Mat. 28. 20.

You cannot here expect that I should enter into the Detail of Particulars: It's the Business of our Lives to instruct you in the way of God's Commandments, which are exceeding Broad ; and when we have done our utmost, we can never so dilate as to exhaust the Subject. I hope I have not shun'd to declare to you the whole Counsel of God. It has been my sincere Endeavour in all my Discourses,

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to teach you, *what is good, and what the Lord requires of you.* Mica' 6. 8.

I shall now only mention a few Comprehensive Scriptures to *stir up your Minds by way of Remembrance.* John 6. 28.

Our Lord's Hearers ask him, *What shall we do that we might work the Works of God?* They were sensible that bare Hearing would not avail to their Salvation; and to their reasonable Enquiry upon that Matter Christ answers, *This is the Word of God, that ye believe in him whom he has sent.* This we may take as the Substance of Christianity.

In another Place he gives us the Summary of the Moral Law. When one ask'd him, *Master,* Mat. 22. 36.

which is the great Commandment of the Law? Jesus said unto him, *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; this is the first and great Commandment, and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* On

these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. Agreeable to this is that of the Apostle Tit. 2.

12, &c. *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope, &c.* Here is the Duty of the Law set upon its proper Basis; Viz. Faith in the Blessed Jesus.

To live soberly, righteously, and godly, with an Eye to that Jesus who died for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, is that Gospel Obedience to which we are under such Obligations as no Power can dispense with.

But tho' I pass over the Object of this Duty in so general Terms, I must be more particular as to the manner of it; because it is not every thing that may be call'd Doing the Word, will answer a saving End, or correspond to God's Expectations from us. That Obedience to the Word which is connected with Happiness, has these Essential Properties.

1. It flows from a *sincere Regard* to God. We must obey *because* God commands; That God whose Majesty we dread, whose Authority we reverence, and whose Grace we adore; to do what God would have us, for that very Reason because he would have us, is absolutely necessary to acceptable Service. How rich soever our Offerings be, he will always reject and abhor where there's Room for that Expostulation, *Did you do it at all unto me, even unto me.* Upon this Account it is that the Apostle lays so vast a stress upon Charity (or Love to God.) *Tho' I speak* (says he) *with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as a sounding Brass or a tinkling Cymbal. And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries and all Knowledge; and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing.* And after having shewn the Insufficiency of even Spiritual and Miraculous Gifts without Charity, he proceeds to pass the same Censure upon a great deal of that which may be call'd *Duty and Doing*, and would make a very Pompous Appearance in the World; for he adds, *Tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* The Sum of all is plainly this, that whatever a Man does in Religion from any other Principle than that of a sincere Regard to God, will prove worthless and unavailable. *The Desire of a Man is his Kindness.* 'Tis so among Men, and 'tis so in God's Account. *Is thy Heart right as my Heart is with thy Heart?* was the Question which *Jehu* put to his Friend *Jehonadab*. So 'tis the Heart God expects; and *if there be a willing Mind* it is accepted, *not according to what a Man hath; not, but according to what he hath.* From whence it has been piously observ'd, "That tho' God oftentimes accepts the Will without the Deed, he never accepts the Deed without the Will.

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2. It is *Impartial*, and without Reserve. Indeed God does not expect perfect Obedience in this World, but yet an acceptable Doer of his Word must *have respect to* Psal. 119. 6. *all his Commandments*, must except against none, nor indulge himself in the neglect of any thing that God has made his Duty. It's the Character of a Hypocrite to be *Partial in God's Law*. And our Apostle sets this Mal. 2. 9. Matter in a clear Light, *Chap. 2. V. 10, 11, &c. Whosoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.* And he gives the Reason of so severe a Censure in the following Verse. *He that hath said do not commit Adultery, said also do not kill, &c.* We must therefore have a Conscientious Regard to Natural and Positive Laws, first and second Table Dutys, if we would please him who *requires of us to do justly, and love* Micah 6. 8. *Mercy, and walk humbly with our God.* It's Impious Mockery to compound for the neglect of one Duty, by Exactness and Abundance in another, as tho' the Holy God might be put off with a Barren Faith, or Pharisaical Righteousness, in spite of his positive and repeated Declarations to the contrary. He can never have a due Regard to the Authority of the Law-givers that mangles the Law at his own Pleasure. He that will obey but as himself pleases, affronts the Sovereign he pretends to own, and Traiterously exalts himself by assuming a Dispensing Power, and making himself superiour to that Law which should govern him.

3. It is *Constant, Habitual, and Persevering*. *Blessed* Psal. 106. 3. *is he that doth Righteousness at all times.* There must be a *patient continuing in well doing: He that endures to the* Rom. 2. 7. *End shall be saved: And in due time we shall reap if we* Mal. 10. 22. *faint not.* Gal. 6. 9. Therefore he that obeys but *when* he pleases, is much such a Servant as he that does but *what* he pleases. *He brings forth fruit to himself, being govern'd by his own uncertain Fancy, not by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* Our Goodness there-
fore

- Hos. a 6. 4. fore must not be like the Morning Cloud or early Dew, that goeth away. It should be as a Living Spring, whose
- Prov. 4. 18. Waters fail not, or as the shining Light that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.
4. It is an Evangelical Obedience, i. e. upon Gospel Principles, and agreeable to the Gospel Constitution.
- 2 Cor. 5. 14. The Love of Christ must constrain us. We must act under the Influences of his Spirit, and not think to furnish out a Holy Conversation in our own Strength.
- Eph. 3. 17. No, we must be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the Inward Man. According to that of the Apostle
- Gal. 2. 20. Paul, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. We must see that we be rooted and built up in him, or else our Fruit will be wild, and our Structure rotten. We must also take care that our Obedience keep its proper Place; that we don't exalt it into the Room of our Redeemer's Righteousness; always remembering that in him we
- 1 Cor. 1. 30. have Righteousness and Strength, that He of God is made unto us Righteousness, and that by the Works of the
- Gal. 2. 16. Law shall no Flesh living be justified. And with this Caution we can never apply our selves too zealously to Duty, nor entertain too high and honourable Thoughts of a Personal Righteousness, which, how much-soever it be depreciated when it presumes to compare with the Righteousness of Christ, is yet in every single Branch of it, in the sight of God of great Price. Insomuch that an Irreversible Decree has made it necessary to our Salvation, and Heaven it self shall sooner pass away than any unholy Soul be admitted into it. Without Holiness
- Heb. 12. 14. no Man shall see the Lord. Blessed are they that do his
- Rev. 22. 14. Commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, &c. For without are Dogs, &c. These and a Thousand Scriptures more bear Testimony to the Reputation of that Gospel Holiness, which some reject as Duty and others scorn as Evangelical.

II. I am to consider *that Hearing* which many would fain substitute in the Room of Doing, and have supply the Place of that Obedience I have been describing. And that I may deal the more effectually with such unhappy Self-deceivers, I shall give their Plea all the Advantage I can, and consider meer hearing with all its most plausible Circumstances, that Men may be prevailed with not to lean upon this *Staff of a broken Reed*, which will not only fail, but enter into their Souls and pierce 'em. And here

I. Hearing alone will not avail to saving Purposes, tho' the Word be dispens'd with the greatest *Purity, Plainness, Zeal and Fervour* imaginable. We are indeed to choose those for our Spiritual Guides whom we apprehend best qualify'd for that Awful Work, and their Gifts best suited to our Edification; but this alone is far from being sufficient to our Salvation. Tho' our Minister be a *Boanerges, a Son of Thunder, or a Barnabas, a Son of Consolation*; Tho' he be an *Apollos, Eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures*, his Qualifications may aggravate, but not prevent our Damnation, if we be unperswadable and disobedient. St. Paul preach'd to many that *contradicted and blasphemed*, and so was Acts 13. 45. to them *the savour of Death unto Death*. Yea, the blessed 2 Cor. 2. 16. Jesus himself the *true and faithful Witness*, will be the Heb. 5. 9. *Author of Eternal Salvation only to them that obey him*: And accordingly he sends away those (as *Workers of Iniquity*) that could say *We have eaten and drunk in thy* Luke 13. 26. *Presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*. Now, if the Excellency of the Preacher could save the Hearers without Doing, certainly these had the best Hopes that heard the Voice of the blessed Jesus himself, *who spake as never Men spake*. But we see their Disappointment, let that be our Caution.

2. Hearing only will not save our Souls, tho' we attend to it with the utmost *Constancy and Frequency* that our Circumstances will admit. How stately and how often soever we hear, we shall be lost for ever, if we only hear. Tho' we hear *in season and out of season*, tho' we take never so much Pains, run never so great Hazards, go from Sea to Sea to seek the Word, and venture our own best Blood to get the sincere Milk of the Word, yet if we only hear, our Labour's lost, and worse than lost, and so it will be.

3. Tho' we hear with never so much *Attention and Diligence*. It is our Duty indeed to attend with the utmost Application, and they are very Criminal who draw nigh to God with their Bodys, when their Hearts are abroad in the World. But it's not enough barely to hear, tho' never so attentively. Tho' we hang upon the Preacher's Lips and catch every flowing Word, this will never supply the Place of Conscientious Obedience. Nor,

4. Tho' we hear with never so much *Understanding*. Indeed it's our Duty to *hear and understand*, but Knowledge separate from Practice will never save us. *If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them*. See to this Purpose, *Rom. 2. 17, 18, 19, &c.* Ignorance is sometimes admitted as an Excuse, but what *Effrontery* is it to plead our Connusance of the Law against an Indictment for breaking it?

5. Hearing alone will not save us, tho' we *Remember* what we hear. I confess it's our Duty to remember what we can, and a Happiness to be able to retain much ; and yet a Man may be able to repeat a Sermon word for word, and after all be a forgetful Hearer, because not a Doer. See *V. 25*. A Faithful Memory and an Honest Heart are two Things, and very often found asunder. The Priests and Pharisees could say,

Mat. 27. 63. *We remember what this Deceiver said while he was yet alive.*
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After three Days I will rise again, and yet we none of us envy their Portion. There's many a one gone down to the Place of Darknels and Horror, with his Head full of Gospel-light, and his Memory full of Gospel-Sermons.

6. Nor will Hearing alone avail, tho' it be with great *Delight* and *Pleasure*: *Herod heard John gladly,* which yet would not compensate for his incestuous Conversation with *Herodias*. And *Ezekiel's* Hearers attended to him, as a *very lovely Song*; and yet this was their Condemnation, That they *heard his Words, but did them not*. Men may love to hear upon a Thousand foreign Accounts, and yet hate to be reformed, and so be lost for ever. As we may, Ezek. 33. 32

7. Tho' we hear with never so strong *Convictions*. The Word which *Paul* preach'd made *Felix* tremble: But tho' the Rock was shook it did not melt, and the Case is sadly common. How many Thousands have shook, and sweat, and wept under Sermons, and yet have gone on still in their *Trespases*, and been plung'd in Eternal Perdition. So again,

8. Tho' we hear with never so good *Purposes* and *Resolutions*. These are indeed our Duty, and a hopeful Step to saving Benefit by the Word, but they often prove Abortive. These Blossoms never knit into Fruit, and many a one has promis'd thus fair that has at last been cut down as *cumbring the Ground*, and cast into the Fire. Christ has taught us the Character of that Son that said, *I go Sir, and went not*: And it was the Language once of those harden'd Wretches, whose Carcasses fell in the wilderness; All that the Lord hath said unto or, we will do. Exod. 19. 8.

III. I am to enquire whence it comes to pass that ever Men should deceive themselves with such a vain Imagination as this is, That Men should thus impose upon

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upon themselves with *Sophistical Arguments* (as the Original Word imports) And here,

1. If Men have *really* such a *formed Apprehension*, (as sometell us many of the *Jews* had) it must be the Effect of gross Ignorance. Such Hearers must needs be perfectly ignorant of the God they pretend to worship, of the Nature of their own Souls, that Salvation they expect, and the very Tenour and Purport of the Word they hear; as I may have occasion to shew more fully in its proper Place. But I can hardly suppose Men capable of such a Ridiculous Thought. And therefore,

2. The Generality at least, of bare Hearers, only declare this *practically*. (as the *Fool* says in his Heart, *there is no God*. He is practically an Atheist, because he lives as if there was none.) And then this must be imputed to the Power of their own Lusts, supported by the Agency of the Devil. They are as it were enchanted and bewitch'd, under an Infatuation, or sort of Distraction; and tho' they have Reason, the Act and Exercise of it is for the Time suspended.

The Matter is so unaccountable that I shall dismiss it with only this Remark. That if Men do really think that meer Hearing will supply the Place of Doing, they are *Weak* to a Wonder. If they know better, and yet act as if this were their Judgment, they are *distracted*, or something worse that I han't a Name for!

IV. I am to *prove the Validity* of the *Conceit*, &c. And to all that I have already said under the Two former Heads I shall add some more direct and *form'd Arguments*. And here,

1. I shall argue from the *Nature and Perfections* of God: A true Notion of them must be admitted, to regulate all our Conceptions in Matters of Religion. Nothing can be true that is not agreeable to the whole Account he has given us of himself: Yea, whatever

cannot

cannot be reconcil'd to any one of his Attributes, is indisputably false. Nor can we believe any thing that we apprehend to cast a Slur upon any of his Perfections, tho' that Apprehension be founded upon mistake. Our Notion must first be rectify'd before our Assent can be demanded. Now upon this Supposition, how vain a Fancy must that be which would substitute meer Hearing in the Room of Doing? Consider this, and shew yourselves Men! Can an All-knowing, Heart-searching God be deceived? Can vain Man that is born like the wild Asses Colt, possibly impose upon him whose Understanding is Infinite? Is it to be suppos'd that he can't distinguish between Ceremony and Obedience? Or that the subtlest Cheat upon Earth can pass upon him Shadow for Substance, Words for Action, or Bodily Exercise for Inward Godliness and a Regular Conversation? Or will a Jealous God be mock'd? Shall a daring Worm be suffer'd to banter him to his Face, and go unpunish'd? Will the Justice of God endure that a Deceiver should have in his Flock a Male, and vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing? Offer it to an Earthly Governour, and judge in this Case by his Resentments. I will ascribe Righteousness to my Maker. And can I then imagine that he who is to judge the World, and render every Man according to his Works, will ever award the same thing to Doers and Hearers, and put no Difference between him that knows his Will and him that did it? Consider seriously! Can the Holy God be suppos'd to take Pleasure in a vile Sinner, meerly because he attends his Worship, and mingles with his People? Would it alter the Nature of a Goat if he should fold among Sheep? Or a false Diamond to be well set? I am assur'd to pursue the Argument. Oh! what Notions must these Men have of God, that can entertain such a Fancy? Or, what a God must he be if they are in the right? But I Argue,

Mal. 2. 14.

2. From the *Nature* of our own *Souls*. If we had no other Facultys but what enabled us to hear and know, and wish and purpose, &c. we might expect that God would require only according to what he gave. But to what purpose is an *Executive Power* and Power of acting agreeably to the Dictate of our Minds, if meer Hearing, under what Circumstances so ever, were sufficient to answer the End of our Creation. At this rate God has given us Facultys in vain, &c. But to pursue that Absurdity would lead me back to the former Argument. And therefore,

2. I argue from the Nature of that *Salvation* we expect. He knows nothing of Salvation or Happiness that does not look upon Holiness Essentially Ingredient to it. For a reasonable Creature to be happy is to have the Image of God renew'd upon his Soul, to be *Partaker of the Divine Nature*. To have transforming Views of his Glory. To be like him, by seeing him as he is, &c. The Work and Happiness of Heaven is to be always in the Presence of God, tasting his Love, doing his Will, and singing his Praise. Now, for any to think they can be thus happy without Holiness, is the wildest Imagination in the World. Either Men must own the Necessity of Holiness to Happiness, or they must find out some other Heaven than the Scripture is acquainted with; for their Hopes are founded upon this wretched Supposition, That they may be saved without Salvation. A Contradiction which I need not expose.

1 Pet. 1. 4.

1 John 3. 2.

4. From the *Constant Tenour* of the *Word* we hear. Hence the Argument is obvious enough: Either the Word you hear is true or false; if false, why do you hear it? If true, why don't you believe it? If you say you do believe it, let me ask you, Is there any thing plainer in it than the Necessity of Obedience, or doing the Will of God? Did you ever hear a Sermon in your Lives that had not some Reference to Practice? We can appeal

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appeal to your Consciences, that whatever has been the Subject of our Preaching, we have always had this visible Aim, to better your Hearts and regulate your Lives. Herein following the Example of our blessed Lord, all whose Sermons were to direct Men's Practice. His first Sermon is in a manner one continued Exhortation; and at the Conclusion of it he has this remarkable Passage, Mat. 7. 24. *Therefore whosoever heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them, I will liken him to a wise Man which built his House upon a Rock. And every one that heareth these Sayings of mine and doth them not, shall be liken'd to a foolish Man which built his House upon the Sand.* Accordingly it is observable that the great Gospel Preacher St. Paul, concludes all his Epistles with Practical Inferences from the Truth he had deliver'd. And this Example of his we all follow; but sure our Applications are strangely Impertinent, if bare Hearing be all your Duty! Which we may be sure can't be,

5. From the *Declar'd Sense* of him that is to judge Men another Day, and fix their Eternal State. Our blessed Redeemer has told us, that it's only the Doers of his Father's Will shall be admitted into Heaven. *Not every one that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven:* And he takes notice of such Impertinent Pleas as I have been mentioning. *Many will say unto me in that Day, Lord have we not prophesyd in thy Name, &c? Then will I profess unto them I never knew you.* And sure he best knows upon what Terms we are to be admitted into his own Glory. Mat. 7. 21.

6. I may argue from the *Insufficiency* of something that goes beyond bare Hearing, with all the Advantageous Circumstances I have mention'd; and that is *partial Obedience*. Now if there be an Obedience, a Doing the Word that will not avail to the Salvation of the Soul, (as I have shew'd at large) meer Hearing, which falls short of that, must needs be insufficient.

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14
Shall the greater be rejected and the less accepted? If he that could say, *All these have I kept from my Youth miscarry'd because he lack'd one thing*; if many a Man whose Conversation is outwardly Regular shall be cast out at last, where shall they appear whose Righteousness does not come up to that of the Scribes and Pharisees? See *Mat. 5. 20.*

7. I might argue from the Report of *unprejudiced Reason*, and *awakened Conscience*: Particularly, in the Case of Dying People. We are apt to judge impartially, when thro' the weakness of Decaying Nature, sensible Objects strike more faintly, and the Soul begins to be disintangl'd from Worldly Incumbrances. And it is notorious, how feelingly Men are then wont to bewail their Neglect of Obedience to the Word, which they have perhaps very diligently heard. They then see thro' all the Sophistical Pretences, by which they were before willingly impos'd upon; and if they liv'd in a Course of wilful Disobedience, can never take Comfort in the Review of a past Life. They then purpose and promise, if God shall spare 'em, to spend the Remainder of their Days in his Faithful Service, and to be *fill'd with the Fruit of Righteousness*. Yea, this is the Sense of the Best of Men; who, tho' they may have no Melancholy Apprehensions, as to their Future State, having built their Hopes upon the *Rock of Ages*, and Anchor'd their Souls upon the Merits of a Redeemer; and to all this have the Testimony of their Conscience, that they *have not departed wickedly from their God*: Yet when they come to die, are deeply humbled under a Sense of their Unprofitableness and Disobedience; and are ready to spend their last Breath, as one of the best Saints upon Earth did, saying, "Lord, forgive my Sins of Omission. Yea, to conclude where the Publican began, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*. Now the Sense of Dying Men has always commanded Re-
verence,

Psal. 18. 21.

A. B. Usher.

Lastly, I might argue from the *Prayers* of these very Men themselves, who beg the *Grace* of God and *Influences* of his Spirit somewhat unaccountably, if they have no Duty incumbent, no *Work* to do. Yea, it is *profoundly* trifling in imploring the *Divine Assistance*, when they have no *Occasion* for it.

28 This may abundantly suffice to prove the Vanity of
such Expectations as I have been considering. ¶ Yet, if
I had aim'd merely to prove so obvious a Matter, I shou
senfible I had said too much. ¶ But Multiplicity of Ar
guments tends to impress as well as convince; and Men
much more need to have Truths fasten'd upon their
Hearts than clear'd to their Understandings. Which
Consideration allows us, in Important Practical Mat
ters, laboriously to prove what very few will formally
deny. As I might instance in the great Truth of the
Being of a God, the Immortality of the Soul, &c.

V. I am to Apply the Truth And here,

1. If Hearing without Doing is insufficient to Salvation, what must be the Case of those who will not so much as vouchsafe to hear? That when they should be attending the Ordinances of God's Worship, are sleeping upon their Beds, loitering in their Houses, working in the Fields, or contriving for the World; and perhaps worse employ'd than those, Consecrating the Lord's Day to the Devil's Service; and treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, when they should be working out their own Salvation. What must be the Doom of those who won't give the Ambassadors of Heaven the Hearing, but say to the Almighty depart us, we desire not the Knowledge of thy ways. A Man may

hear :

hear and yet perish, but he that refuses to go so far, carries about him the visible Tokens of Reprobation.

12. What must be the Case of these whose Hearings falls short of that which I have represented as absolutely insufficient to Salvation? As particularly,

Those who upon Choice hear *Blind Guides*, when the Providence of God offers 'em an Able Ministry. Who choose to be under the Conduct of such as will *prophecy smooth things*, and never disturb their sleepy Consciences with a loud and faithful Alarm, when they might enjoy the Blessing of such Teachers as would lift up their voice as a *Trumpet*, and not spare to tell 'em the Truth, for fear of their Enmity.

And what must become of those who hear *without Attention*? who, instead of regarding the Voice of God that sounds from the Pulpit, are amus'd with the Dress and Deportment of the Auditors, and are as unconcern'd at the Business before 'em as the Seats they sit in, or the Ground they tread on.

Equally miserable must they be who hear but *understand not*; that neither know, nor strive to know the Things they hear: But after a long Course of Attendance upon the Preaching of the Word, are as ignorant as Children, and had need to be taught which are the *first Principles of the Oracles of God*.

Heb. 5. 12.

What will become of those who *never remember* what they hear, and that not thro' a natural Weakness of Memory, but a negligent and heedless Temper: that never treasure up the good Word, but let it slip, as tho' it were an Impertinent Tale, and utterly insignificant to any serious Purposes.

And of those who hear without any *Inclination or Delight*. The Authority of Superiours, Education, Interest, &c. constrains 'em to give their Attendance; but at the same time they cry, *Behold what a weariness is it!* and with the Sabbath were *over*.

Mal. 2. 14.

Finally

Finally, what shall we say of such as hear without any *Convictions* or *Resolutions*? that never startle at the *Thunder* of the Law, nor listen to the *Charms* of the Gospel, but are *like the deaf Adder*, utterly unimpress'd, and their Hearts harder than the *Nether Mill-stone*. If a Man may like *Agrippa*, believe the Scriptures, and be *almost perswaded to be a Christian*, and yet *fail of the Grace of God*; where shall such as these appear? If a Man may knock at Heaven Gate and yet be thrust down to Hell, its easy to know their Doom who *never ask the way to Zion, nor set their Faces thitherward*.

3. We may here see the Reason why among multitudes of Professors there are so few *Real Saints*; because Hearing is so much easier than Doing. Men may hear the Word at very little Expence, but can't practice it without more Application and Self-denial than Flesh and Blood will ever like. It's easier to hear a Thousand Sermons than renounce one Idol, mortify one Lust, or perform one Duty in *Spirit and in Truth*. Upon this Account the Gate is said to be *strait* and the way *narrow*; and no wonder if there be but *few that find it*.

Lastly, We may see what Reason Ministers have to *press* their Hearers to be *Doers* of the Word. This is the truest Evidence of our Love to People's Souls. And in this Method I choose to express my Affection to You of this *Lecture*. I thankfully acknowledge, You have been kind to me, and the best Return I can make, is to entreat You to be kind to your own Souls, in a particular Regard to the Word You have loved to hear. *Suffer therefore Brethren, the Word of Exhortation. Be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only, &c.* And let me add by way of *Motive*.

1. If you are Hearers only, you'll certainly *lose* your Souls. You may flatter your selves with Hopes of Heaven; but as sure as Heaven is Heaven, or that there

is a God in it, your Expectations will be frustrate, and your Hopes make you ashamed. What Character would you give that Man, that being bound to the Indies, should content himself with hearing a Lecture of Geography or Navigation. Will attending a Discourse of Medicine or Anatomy, cure a Disease, or set a broken Bone? I wish Men would first make the Ridiculous Experiment upon their vile Bodies, before they trifle so egregiously at the Expence of their precious Souls!

2. That Hearing, from which you so fondly expect so much, will not only disappoint your Hopes, but aggravate your Misery. The more Means you have of *knowing your Master's Will*, the more *Stripes* you must suffer for disobeying it. *It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorah in the Day of Judgment, than for you.*

3. Your Ruin will lie at your own Doors; *Deceiving your own selves.* The Word of God says nothing to countenance such a wretched Mistake: And we the Ministers of that Word have the Testimony of our own Consciences, and appeal to yours; yea, call him to witness *that is greater than our Hearts*, that we have never said any thing to encourage such a Conceit. And I would once more, *at parting*, sound the Awful Alarm, and enter my solemn Protest against your taking up with any thing short of Practical Godliness; that if you will throw away your *own Souls*, I may at least deliver *mine*.

4. That Doing God's Word which we urge, is no such *unpleasant Thing*, that you should make use of such unaccountable Sophistry to evade it. No Tongue can express the Pleasures of Holy Obedience. The Exercise of Love to God, and Faith in a Redeemer, Communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Inward Tranquility of Soul, and sometimes inexpressible Exultations in Prospect of Eternal Glory, afford a Pleasure:

Pleasure which no *Stranger* intermeddles with. Yea, it's impossible to convey an *Idea* of these Things to unexperienc'd Minds: Yet to this purpose is the Unanimous Profession of those who have practically known the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, avowing that there is more Real Pleasure even in Mortification, Self-denial, and Suffering for Christ, than in any Worldly Enjoyment whatsoever; according to the Testimony of the Fittest, because most Experienc'd Judge: Who has told us by the Spirit of God, that *All Wisdoms ways are Pleasantness*. Prov. 3. 17.

5. When we call upon you to do the Word you hear, we press you to nothing but what is *possible* and feasible. We know the present Frame of Human Nature too well to expect absolute Perfection in this Life: And we acknowledge that even Gospel Duty has its Difficulties; but what God expects is what you *may* perform, not in your *own* Strength but *his*. Under the Old Testament there was a *Noah, a just Man and per-* Gen. 6. 9. *fect, who walk'd with God, and was righteous before him:* A *Caleb, who followed God fully:* A *Job, who was per-* Num. 14. 24. *fect and upright, and feared God and eschewed Evil.* The Job 1. L. *time would fail to tell of all those Worthies who through Faith wrought Righteousness and obtain'd Promises.* Heb. 11. 32, 33.

Under the New Testament Dispensation there have been vast Numbers of Holy Souls, who with *Paul* have found God's Grace sufficient for 'em, and could do all 2 Cor. 12. 9. *things thro' Christ strengthening 'em.* Now *Jesus Christ is* Phil. 4. 13. *the same yesterday, to day and for ever.* He has the Re- Heb. 13. *sidue of the Spirit, and will give it to them that ask it.* However, make Trial, and see if you don't find suitable Help! Can you expect that a Plea of Disability should be admitted against President and Promise, and without Trial too?

6. The Master, whose Will you are called to do, is not implacable or severe. He knows how to make kind

Isa. 130. 4. Allowances, and dispense Gracious Pardons. *There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayst be feared.* Let me add,

7. If you will not be Doers of the Word, you'll certainly *wish* you had. O my Friends, we foresee a black and gloomy Time, an Hour of Affliction, a Day of Death and Judgment, &c. in which you'll *believe and tremble*, as your Tempters the Devils do now. You'll believe then that Truth against which you may now perhaps rise up in Scorn and Indignation. You'll see thro' the vain Pretences that now deceive you, and find upon what a Sandy Foundation you built your Hopes, and sorely wish when 'tis too late, that you could say with the Apostle, *Our rejoycing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our Conversation in this World.*

Lastly, I shall only farther say, It is no *Interest* of our own we seek in this Matter. Our Temporal Interest may be as well serv'd by the bare Hearing; and we are so satisfy'd of this, that it's with the greatest Heaviness of Heart we sometimes consider how many of the most Liberal Encouragers of the Gospel will fail at last of the *Grace* of it, and never enter into that *Rest that remains for the People of God*. And as to our Spiritual and Eternal Interest, tho' every Convert be our *Crown and Joy*, yet we have a Master whose Rewards are not dispens'd according to the Success we have, but the Diligence we give. *We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that perish.* Tho' we labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought, yet our *Judgment is with the Lord*, and our *Work with our God*.

2 Cor. 2. 15

Isa. 49. 4.

I should now give some *Directions* to the willing Hearer, that would also be a Doer of the Word. I shall content my self to give you some few Hints.

Consider what has been said, and see if I have not fully prov'd the Insufficiency of bare Hearing to Salvation;

tion; and offer'd Motives to Duty that have their Weight.

Settle it upon your Minds that the Word you hear is God's: The signification of his Will constituting your Duty. Remember it is not our Word, but our Master's. *We preach not our selves; but Christ Jesus the Lord.* It will help incline you to obey, if you consider who commands. 2 Cor. 4:5

Come to hear with a *Design* to do: Bring your selves to a Resolution; which is the next step to actual Performance. Resolve in the strength of Christ, that you will practice as well as hear. That you'll obey God and not mock him; feed your own Souls and not deceive 'em.

Often *reflect* and examine how you have heard. Think with your selves, I have been hearing the Word, what Impressions has it made? what Convictions have I felt? what Resolutions have I form'd? Now my Soul, take Care to manage according to what thou hast been convinc'd is thy Duty, and resolv'd shall be thy Practice.

Lament your past Unprofitableness: Deep Repentance that you have heard so long in Vain, will be a mighty Means to quicken you to Duty for time to come. The shameful Remembrance of your past Trifling may be expected to make you double your Diligence.

Especially be much in *believing Views* of Unseen Realities. Set God, and Christ, and Judgment, and Heaven, and Hell before you; and you'll find that by holding your Minds close to these Objects, your Hearts will warm, and those Affections take Fire, with which you'll run *the ways of God's Commandments*.

Be particularly careful that you sit duly loose from the World, and ben't too much embarrass'd and incumber'd with It. Remember seriously *no Man can serve*

(122)
~~serve two Masters, God and Mammon~~ : while you are
in full Pursuit of the Pleasures and Profits of this
Life, you'll hardly be at leisure to hear the Word,
much less to do it.

Above all, Beg the Spirit of God; otherwise we
speak in Vain; yea, so would an Angel too; if He
should Sound a Trumpet in your Ears as loud as the
last will be; otherwise you are convinc'd in Vain,
resolve in Vain, and attempt in Vain. You must
Pray hard for the Spirit of Christ, without which you
can never do his Will.

And now let me resume my Exhortation, *Be De-
sires, &c.* And Oh that I knew how to make it reach
your Hearts! But I know Success is Gods; and there-
fore shall only add, That I am so perswaded of the
Truth and Importance of what I have offer'd, that I
would leave it with you, as my last Advice, if I
were to step out of this Pulpit into Eternity.

12 MR 58

F I N I S.